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Attachment to
62026
O/NE Cy No. 12

*"Psychological Impact of a Strategic Air
Offensive against the USSR."
Priority is Routine*

May 23, 1951

MEMORANDUM

To: R - Mr. Armstrong
From: P - Mr. Barrett
Subject: Request for National Intelligence Estimate

Among the primary objectives of the current U. S. psychological offensive against the USSR are (1) to widen the schism between the peoples of the USSR and their government and (2) to convince the peoples of Russia that if war is forced upon us we will fight against their government and not against the peoples of the USSR.

Should general war break out and a strategic air offensive be launched against the USSR, the United States will be faced with the problem of adapting its psychological program to the exigencies of the military situation, particularly as affected by the use of the atom bomb.

In view of the need for advance planning and in view of the interdepartmental interests that are involved, a National Intelligence Estimate seems indicated in order to appraise the psychological impact within the USSR of a strategic air offensive (including the use of the atom bomb) against principal Soviet industrial and population centers.

For the purposes of this estimate it can be assumed that attacks may be directed against major population centers throughout the Soviet Union which combine in differing proportions military and industrial targets with civilian personnel not directly concerned with the operation of such targets. Attacks may also be directed against military installations, communications facilities, power plants, dams, etc., not located in major population centers.

State Dept. review completed

Document No. _____
Review of this document by CIA has determined that

- ☐ CIA has no objection to declass
☒ It contains information of CIA interest that must remain classified at TS S (C)
Authority: HR 70-2
☐ It contains nothing of CIA interest

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DOCUMENT NO. _____
NO CHANGE IN CLASS. ☐
☐ DECLASSIFIED
CLASS. CHANGED TO: TS S (C) 1991
NEXT REVIEW DATE: _____
AUTH: HR 70-2
DATE: 22 JAN '81 REVIEWER: 018557

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In general, the following information is desired:

1. What reactions may be expected from the Soviet propaganda machine?
2. What reactions may be expected from important population groups throughout the Soviet Union in the event that warning is given before attacks?
3. What reactions may be expected from important population groups throughout the Soviet Union in the event that targets are attacked without prior warning?
4. What are the principal characteristics of the targets which may affect the reactions referred to above (i.e. the historical significance of a city, its geographic location, etc.) and in what way may these characteristics be expected to affect the reactions?
5. What are the principal attendant circumstances which may affect the reactions referred to above (i.e. which side makes the first overt military move, which side launches the first strategic air attack, which side first uses the a-bomb, etc.) and in what way may these attendant circumstances be expected to affect the reactions?

It is the feeling of the Psychological Operations Coordinating Board that an estimate of this nature is basic to national psychological warfare planning. I hope, therefore, that it will be treated as a matter of the highest importance and that the resources of all intelligence agencies of this Government, as well as the coordinating and evaluating facilities of the Central Intelligence Agency, can be used in producing it.

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